



GAUTENG PROVINCE

HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

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GAUTENG HEALTH ACHIEVES YET ANOTHER MILESTONE IN SURGICAL MARATHONS

A one-year-eight-months old bundle of joy will now not only be able to smile with confidence but grow up with a mouth that functions properly with low risk of acquiring infectious diseases.

This comes after the little one underwent cleft lip and cleft palate surgery at Steve Biko Academic Hospital in Tshwane on Tuesday, 29 August 2023 as part of the second surgical marathons conducted by 23 Gauteng public hospitals.

Cleft palate is a common birth condition where the roof of the mouth does not join properly during birth, while cleft lip is a birth condition where the tissue that makes up the lip does not join completely before birth. This abnormality affects speaking and feeding. However, this critical surgery restores normal function with minimal scarring.

The toddler will also grow up with the support of speech and language therapists accessible across Gauteng hospitals. This will help correct speaking difficulties.

A total of 358 surgical procedures were conducted on patients who are on waiting lists for elective surgeries which include arthroplasty, hernia repair, maxillofacial, hysterectomy and cataract excision were performed across the 23 Gauteng hospitals, exceeding the set target of 300. The patients were chosen according to surgical backlog lists at every hospital, which incorporates waiting time and prioritisation according to clinical needs.

The impact of this project is greater than just reducing the surgical backlogs. The greater impact is on the patients who will now have functionality restored because they have had challenges with their eyesight due to cataracts or challenges with mobility due to severe knee and hip osteoarthritis.

When these individuals have had their surgery, they will be able to do the things they love, see their loved ones properly and experience a new reality.

Surgical backlogs are a moving target as new cases get added to the waiting list while facilities deal with the backlog of patients awaiting surgery. The introduction of the surgical marathons is enabling the Gauteng Department of Health to continuously work towards decreasing waiting list of elective surgeries on a large scale.

Gauteng hospitals will also continue to employ “surgical blitz” on weekends as an ongoing strategy to reduce waiting times for patients.

“I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the clinicians and their respective teams who continue to make positive change in the lives of patients undergoing these surgeries. We are truly grateful of the many teams in our hospitals who continue to break boundaries and are committed to the course as we started on Nelson Mandela Day this year with our intense surgical marathons.

“All our teams which include specialist, registrars, medical officers, scrub nurses and other support staff are all vital in making these operations a success,” said MEC for Health and Wellness Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko.

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Issued by the Gauteng Department of Health

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